

Citizens Liaison Committee to Community Center
Minutes – Jan. 25, 2005 – at Takoma Park rec center, 7315 New Hampshire Ave.

Meeting convened at 7:35 p.m.

Members present:

Howard Kohn — chair, Annie Mozer – recorder

Sheryl Brugh, Richard Levine, Juanita Kus-Lorentz, Andy Kelemen, Erik Lichtenberg, Maurice Belanger, Dallas Burtraw, Tom Gagliardo, Pam Larson, Peter Kovar, Wayne Sherwood, Karen Mendez, Alice Sims, Stephen Brown, Paul Chrostowski

Guests: Tim Dowd, Eva Capelletti, Joy Austin-Lane

Staff: Barb Matthews, Debra Haiduven

ITEM ONE

Brief report by Barb re: status of current construction. For the gym a feasibility study would take about 90- 120 days for geophysical borings and other tests.

Wayne -- do we have to revisit the same questions?

Barb -- concern is poor soil, need new borings to assure secure foundation

Paul – it would behoove us to ascertain that soil is adequate

Andy – There has to be a budget set for a feasibility study

Barb – In my experience, a feasibility study with borings would be about \$30K. With poor soil, we need to know approx. cost for a foundation, and we need to understand constraints size of the gym b/c of duct bank. It's where the utilities run, an underground structure, but no one knows the exact location. Knott says site may require pre-excavation to work around it.

Juanita- Why don't they know?

Andy – drawings don't include the duct bank

HK – How should we proceed over the next months?

Barb – Go back thru original designs to determine if that is the gym we want, then try to get an accurate cost estimate. We don't want to start construction without a firm handle on the project. This is based on discussion with Council.

Peter- What about schedule? If we attempted to get additional bond in the fall, how much time would we have for a feasibility study?

Barb – My advice: be slow and deliberative, don't rush to fall bond. Yes, interest rates may go up, but more important to be certain about what we want

Andy – we are talking about money for study to get to the point that we have a foundation to build a gym?

Barb – yes, there is a time and a place for professional, independent expertise. This would be the place.

Joy – Council was near to approving a bond for a gym but we didn't because the cost numbers weren't hard enough.

Barb- Based on info from school district, and from Knott, the gym wouldn't be less than \$2M and probably as high as \$3M. Remember that school gyms are cheaper unless they're stand-alone.

Tom – does that estimate include moving the duct bank?

Barb – Knott included \$400k for relocating duct as part of \$2.9M for construction. They admitted they put a significant contingency in because this site is hard to work

Dallas – If no fall bond, when is the next opportunity?

Barb – The state goes thru two cycles -- latter part of Jan 2006 would be the next issuance

Dallas – During this study our group could continue discussion of the gym structure?

Barb – yes, look at elements of structure to modify cost

Steve – One option is gym box on simple slab foundation, but we have to realize we probably need excavation and refill just to get solid foundation

Wayne – cost of flood-control pipes really caught us off guard in first phase. What do we need to attend now with the County? Could there any other big surprises?

Barb – We need to pursue this question with the County.

Andy – Question to Joy: Does council has money for funding exploration stage?

Joy - A \$30K study is doable, but not \$100K

HK – An estimate on cost of study would be good

Joy -- The case for the gym needs to be put to public. Kudos to group that's present for asking tough questions and trying to make a determination on costs. Also a determination

on whether a gym is needed. Many residents don't know we lost a gym at the fire station, or that the SSI rec facility had a gym that serve TP. Those gyms are no longer available. And ICB is an agency that's not well known, how they control access to school gyms. You might also consider alternative locations for a new gym if we cannot provide the parking to make it feasible at the current site.

Wayne – We should be rooted in the research we did before, not winging it

Tom – I originally opposed the gym. I don't think the case was made in '99, but now it is '05. I'm willing to reevaluate (my opposition), but we need to be specific about why it's needed and what it will cost. And whether there's an optional site. This information needs to go out to the public. It's been a bitter experience in TP with the construction to date.

Maurice – At our last meeting there was a report on how other gyms are really booked up. So that information is out with the public. People seem queasy about the cost. They hear one figure, and then it doubles. Also the location – we didn't know about soil issues at this site and now there is the issue of the parking

Peter- cost trumps all these issues. Are people willing to spend the money?

Richard – there was a survey in '99, but it was a randomized wish list from TP residents – everyone envisioned different things for the community center. What kind of programming do we envision?

HK- I suggest we form a working group to write a report that goes to the Council re: the gym and programming.

(General support expressed for this idea)

Tom – A report is valuable, but we should also trim it down to recommendations

Paul – for realistic recommendations, we need the feasibility study

Joy – and the parking issue needs to be addressed –

Barb- Knott did give us estimate with parking underground; if the support structure for the gym requires digging, you might as well get the benefit of underground parking

Joy – can there be angled parking on Maple Ave.?

Barb – how far down Maple can you go – would it cause problems in adjacent neighborhoods?

Erik- we need to get a firm sense of what County needs for parking; we shouldn't waste our time if we can't resolve parking issue

ITEM TWO

Erik and Debra lead discussion on what it would cost to run gym with three basic options: 1) High-end revenue-raising; 2) Lots of free time for community users; 3) Something in between.

Debra – This committee can weigh in with a recommendation. It will be up to the Council to decide.

Dallas reports on his survey of municipal gyms (report attached). In general, Greenbelt, Rockville and Gaithersburg have a community-first policy for use of gyms and community centers, but they do make bring in some revenue from rentals.

Andy – Is their objective to break even, or is their goal to provide as much community service as possible?

Dallas – They were incredulous to that question. They probably could rent 100% of the time, but in all cases there was a strong push for community use. Once the community is taken care of, they push to rent the space that's left.

Wayne – I thought we wanted the gym for our community, especially teens. We need to decide our target groups, teens or adults who rent.

Dallas – We were researching a scenario where the City got in a bind and couldn't afford operating costs. Could the City rent the gym to make money? The answer from these other cities was "yes, you could." But they themselves are committed to their communities.

Erik – When you open up a gym for teens, we pay to provide that service. If we present different options, then citizens here can decide which option they want.

Peter – Other jurisdictions rent at down times. They use money-making option to pay very basic operating costs like gym attendants and electricity for lights.

HK- Our objective is to present different options to the Council. For every service there's a cost, but also a benefit and possible savings. A gym may prevent crimes. How do we calculate the savings of crime prevention?

Joy – There is also a question of what would the market pay in TP? Council will look at the effectiveness of cost recovery, but I don't see the Council building a gym strictly for revenue. In these other cities, are they talking 24 hrs a day?

Debra – until 10 pm

ITEM THREE

Paul delivers briefing on options for “green” features in new contract to renovate existing admin offices for dance room and game rooms (report attached)

Paul – Joy was moving force behind incorporating “green” features. Things that benefit the environment can also be cost effective. But we have some constraints. The design for new contract has been done, and city is about to go out for RFPs. If we make too many changes the architectural services will be costly.

Wayne – What 3 or 4 things would be at the top of your list?

Paul – Energy savings would be first, solar systems -- biggest environmental bang for the buck, savings on utility bills. Indoor air quality would be second – eliminate emissions from carpeting, paint, etc. Environmental savings, plus a health benefit for employees.

HK -- For reusable, recycled materials, etc., you want vendors that are certified. Can you give the City a list of vendors?

Paul – Yes.

HK – Anything else?

Paul – Skylight will be an energy saver. Albert Nunez recommends a solar skylight manufactured in Colorado.

Barb – Cost estimate for solar skylight is about \$10K. The bigger cost will be installation. We will need to work with existing builders in order to retain warranty on the roof.

Paul – skylights are attractive and would save on lighting costs and heat. Albert is also looking at HVAC – about \$40 and \$60K to tie solar systems into existing systems in the building.

Alice – Natural light is always preferable. That’s Takoma Park! So is recycling. Is recycled carpet easy to get?

Paul – Yes, Dupont recycles nylon carpet – might add 5% to cost. Other recyclables would be much higher, e.g. – recycled wood.

Eva – if the building was “green” people would be willing to pay the extra money

Paul -- The gold standard in construction is Specification 1350 from the California Dept of Energy. That would be the ultimate objective, but local contractors are not familiar with these standards, so that would make it difficult to get a bid for this work. One thing we can do is re-write spec documents with CA 1350 in mind, but make the specs

comfortable for local contractors. Larry Abell could do that, and that is my personal preference, but it wouldn't be cheap.

Peter- How do we factor in the nuclear-free element? If the lowest bidder is on the nuclear list, what will we choose?

Tom – nuclear-free zone is a political statement. It shouldn't limit anything. Environmental concerns are immediate and concrete

Pam - What happened to the “green” features we recommended for Phase One?

Debra – Solar roof panels were incorporated in planning, but were postponed because of cost

HK – The roof is constructed to accommodate the panels when we have the money. Also, the new ventilation system is considered “green”

Paul – Building on a “brown” site, as we're doing, gives us the most points of all. “Fill-in” construction is very environmentally responsible.

Maurice – What would be cost and time for rewriting specs?

Paul – I could do a lot, and staff time could be involved, but a consultant would be faster. Could cost \$10k

Debra – Would the construction cost be higher?

Paul – Yes, many of the materials are more expensive. You have to look at lifecycle costs to reduce expenses. If current estimate is \$800K for this work, it would add about 10%.

Peter – how long would it take to capture \$80k in savings?

Paul – payback is slow for most things; for solar power it's faster

Joy – I'm not trying to minimize the additional cost, but I felt we needed to consider “green” ideas because they have a value in this community

HK- Could we identify the cheapest “green” materials, where we could get the most bang for the buck without drying up the budget?

Paul – yes, I could take a stab

Tom – Could we put the responsibility on bidders to find the least expensive items?

Debra – Remember there were only three bidders last time. If we make it too difficult, we may not get even three next time.

Wayne – Could we focus on the upstairs of the building that will be used only at certain parts of the day? Could we have a control system that is segregated so the upstairs is conserving energy at night?

Joy – The HVAC for all the offices are on the second floor can be turned off when staff leaves.

HK – What if Paul takes the initiative and identifies 5 or 6 items as our highest priorities?

Andy – You mean cheapest? Do we always go for lowest bid, rather than the best value?

Joy – We went for lowest in Phase One

Andy – bad idea, should go for value

Joy –in past, the bidding numbers had a wide range

Erik- it sounds like getting enough bidders was a problem last time

Joy – turn-around time was too quick; next time we will have better notification, put the RFP in the right trade publications

HK – Paul, do you have contractors to recommend?

Paul – I can give you some names; there are many around the area

Adjourned at 9:45pm